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ABSTRACT

This book is the third in a set of three study guides designed to help students of educational administration critically analyze contemporary theory in the field, examine the field from a new viewpoint, and develop their own, more practical knowledge base. The first of the volume's three sections, by John Codd, explores the notion that administration is philosophy in action. The section argues that dichotomies between facts and values, observations and interpretations, and practice and theory cannot be sustained, and that the technological view based on such dichotomies must be rejected. Instead, administrative action should combine both executive and critical-reflective dimensions. The second section, by John Clark, considers the ways in which different approaches to decision making relate to practical situations in which any decision will cause conflict. The practical value of a critical theory approach is illustrated. The third section, by Richard Bates, describes the impact of bureaucratization on educational administration and on social endeavors in general, and calls for the demystification of organizations and the democratization of education. Each section offers recommended readings and activities and provides a list of references. A postscript by Laurie Rattray-Wood reviews the basic goals of the study guide series. (PGD)

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EED431
Introduction to Educational Administration

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Study Guide 3
Critical Practice in Educational Administration

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EED431
Introduction to Educational Administration

Study Guide 3
Critical Practice in Educational Administration

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The course includes:
Study Guide 1: *Tradition and Turmoil in Educational Administration*
Study Guide 2: *Thinking About Educational Administration*
Study Guide 3: *Critical Practice in Educational Administration*
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Front cover
'Interlock', aluminium construction by F. C. and M. Hinder, 1979, Deakin University.

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SECTION 6
PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION

John Codd

'Black Sun', welded metal by I. King, undated, Deakin University.

PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION

John Codd

Introduction

Administration is philosophy in action (Hodgkinson 1978a, p. 3).

On first consideration, it seems paradoxical to assert that administration is philosophy in action. For while it is self-evident that administration is a practical activity, it is often assumed that philosophy is a form of intellectual contemplation somewhat removed from the everyday world of decision making and action. Thus the world of the administrator is clearly seen to be a domain of practical reality, presided over not by the philosopher but by the person of plain common sense. Indeed, in this view, philosophy and common sense are often juxtaposed in such statements as, 'There's no need to be all philosophical about it, it's just administrative common sense', or 'administrators, being practical people, should rely upon their common sense if they are to avoid philosophical confusions and theoretical complications'. But such statements reflect a number of serious misconceptions concerning not only the nature of administration but, more fundamentally, the very nature of the relationship between human thought and action. Hence, in asserting that administration is philosophy in action we are implying not only that administration can and should be both reflective and active, but also that philosophy can and should be more than merely passive speculation.

Merely to recognise these implications is not enough, however. If we are to develop an orientation towards a critical practice of educational administration it is necessary to explore these implications in detail. This means not only asserting that administration is philosophy in action but showing how such a reconceptualisation is possible. It is to this task that the present section will be directed.

Rationality and values in administrative action

After positing his definition of administration as philosophy in action, Hodgkinson delivers the following important caveat:

> By philosophy I do not mean any given body of doctrine, any one world-view, world system, or articulation of a specific epistemology, axiology, or esthetic. By philosophy I mean in barest essence the process of correct thinking and the process of valuing: rationality, or logic, and values. These constitute the dual aspects of activity whereby administration becomes philosophical (Hodgkinson 1978a, p. 3).

But if we are to understand the notion of philosophy in action, we need to clear the ground much more carefully than this. For the above statement leaves problematic what could be meant by rationality and values, which is precisely the problem at the very heart of administrative theory. It is a problem which is often ignored but it ought to be confronted at a number of different levels.

If we are to confront the fundamental philosophical issues in administration we need first to clear up some common misapprehensions concerning the place of theory in social life. Foremost among these misapprehensions is the belief that social theories are discovered in a

context that is quite separate from their application. On this view, administrators are thought to be necessarily engaged in political practice, whereas social scientists are not; conversely, social scientists are thought to be necessarily engaged in constructing theories, whereas administrators are not. It is assumed, in other words, that the task of social scientists is to produce a body of knowledge encompassing various administrative theories and domains of policy science which administrators may then either ignore or take up and convert into social action. Thus the social theorist is taken to be the technical handmaiden of the administrator, giving rise to what Fay (1975) calls 'the technological view of politics'.

Behind this technological view is the assumption that policy science makes available to administrators a theoretical basis upon which to decide the 'best means' of achieving certain predetermined goals. Thus, policy science and administrative theory are relegated to a totally instrumental function, succinctly described by Fay in the following terms:

> A policy science is supposed to be a device for organising political thought in a rational way, merely a method for clarifying empirical relationships among alternative actions and for sorting out their likely consequences, and a procedure for making 'correct' decisions; as such, it is supposed to be employable by anyone, regardless of his political views, for any end whatsoever, and its results are supposed to be impartial in the sense of not being dependent upon the particular evaluations of the policy scientist for their truth (Fay 1975, p. 57).

Such a position, when examined closely, is seen to be founded upon two dichotomies, neither of which holds up under critical scrutiny. The first is a dichotomy between 'facts' and 'values', and the second is a dichotomy between 'observation' and 'interpretation'. Each is an example of what the sociologist George Homans called a 'false dichotomy'.

> To the classic peril of being impaled on the horns of a dilemma, we moderns should add a new one, being split by a false dichotomy (Merton, quoting Homans in Homans, 1951, p. xxiii).

But if we are to understand the place of theory in administrative action, each of these dichotomies should be challenged. It is not possible to arrive at a critical practice of educational administration while entertaining the technological view of politics in which administrators are thought to be independent arbiters of scientific theory, using it to determine objectively the best course of action to take. The executive and the contemplative dimensions of social theory should not be forced apart in such an artificial or simplistic manner.

Now there is an important sense in which administrators are not like social scientists. They are more concerned with using knowledge than with seeking it, with application than with abstraction, and with problem-solving than with problem-finding. But this points to a difference of focus or emphasis rather than a substantive difference of kind. Both administrators and social scientists are necessarily engaged in arriving at judgments based upon interpretations of social reality.

We can elaborate on this point by returning to the first of the two dichotomies mentioned above, namely, the separation of 'facts' from 'values'. It is often assumed that administrators can derive their values from one source and ascertain the facts of the situation from another completely independent source, in particular the organisational theorist or the behavioural scientist. This implies that the goals (of a school, for example) are politically determined and institutionally located in one context while, in another context, the social scientist can be considered

competent only to recommend the 'best means' or the most economical/effective/functional procedures which are instrumental in attaining those already posited goals. Thus we have the simplistic identification of decisions concerning means with the factual side of the fact-value dichotomy. But it is an identification which cannot be sustained logically because it overlooks completely the assumed values in terms of which the 'best' means are to be ascertained. This produces a contradiction, as Fay points out, implicit in the claim that social science can be value-free.

> So it is that a policy science that attempts to provide a structure in terms of which political questions could be settled 'rationally' must involve reference to just those considerations that the idea of policy science was designed to eliminate, namely, notions of significance and worth. As a result, debates between policy scientists about the most efficient means would still be inherently 'political' in the sense that the choice of standards of what is to count as evidence and proof of some social policy being the 'best' (in this case, the meaning of the criterion of efficiency) would necessarily reflect the values of the disputants (Fay 1975, p. 51)

The significance of this dilemma for the administrator is profound. For not only are there institutional values to be articulated and defended through administrative practice, but there are also values that are inherent within the very process of policy formation itself. As Fay makes clear,

> all political decisions, even those which are seen as means to an end, are social policies, and as such they embody a notion of what people ought to be required or permitted to do to others. No social policy's worth can be solely instrumental because any such policy will require that people interact with one another in certain definite ways, and for this reason it must have a moral value *in itself* . . . *All* political proposals, no matter how instrumental, will alter and shape the personal relations of at least some of the members of a society, and will affect the relative welfare of various classes of people; as such they embody moral notions as to what is permissable, just, or right in human affairs. They are a species of moral statement (Fay 1975, p. 52).

Thus, it is clear that administrative action is necessarily a form of moral action and, as such, it must always come to rest upon fundamental cultural or ideological assumptions, hypotheses or beliefs about the nature of social reality. This brings us back to the second of the false dichotomies referred to above, that is, the separation of 'observation' from 'interpretation'. Here, the mistake is to assume that any kind of observable data is completely independent intitially from the theoretical interpretations that can be placed upon it. That it is a mistake can be shown only by arguing for the proposition that all observation is theory-laden. But what can be said, briefly, in defence of this very important philosophical claim?

The importance of cultural context

Educational administration, like any other form of social action, can be understood only in relation to the context in which it occurs. Depending on the context, the administrator will focus on some aspects of a situation to the exclusion of others, he or she will direct their decisions towards some purposes rather than others, and consider some people's interests rather than others. As with any other form of political activity, administration involves an interpersonal process in which social meanings and definitions are either already shared or able to be negotiated. In short, administration is always mediated through a cultural form.

The word 'culture' is used in several different ways. For example we sometimes use it in everyday language to designate a special group of interests and activities such as classical music, literature and art. In this sense, we speak of 'high brow' or 'middle-class' culture. But the word is also used, quite differently, in the field of anthropology. We may, for instance, speak of 'Aboriginal culture' and thereby refer to all the beliefs, customs, art forms, social practices and values that are associated with the traditional Aboriginal way of life. Neither of these uses, however, is intended when we speak of culture in relation to educational administration.

Culture, in relation to the school, is used to refer to the social context in which the individual (whether it be principal, teacher or pupil) gives meaning to his or her experience. In this sense, culture is comprised of three main elements:

1. Symbolic forms (language, non-verbal signs, art objects, ceremonies and rituals)
2. Conventions, rules and norms governing the actions of individuals and groups
3. Patterns of personal belief, values and commitment

When it is defined in this way, we begin to appreciate both the complexity and the subtlety of the relationship between culture and educational administration. At times the school could be seen to be transmitting, through the curriculum, elements of culture to the pupils. Moreover, the culture embodied within the organisational and administrative context of the school provides an underlying fabric upon which the tapestry of social life is woven. It is in cultural terms that all administrative decisions, discussions and transactions acquire their meaning. But culture is not something of which people are consciously aware. It comprises the forgotten or hidden connections between the basic perceptions and ideas available, and the shared conventions between people through which these perceptions and ideas acquire mutual significance. It may also comprise tacit knowledge of the forms of expression and symbols that give rise to, and make possible, all endeavours to communicate with others.

Forming cognitive appraisals

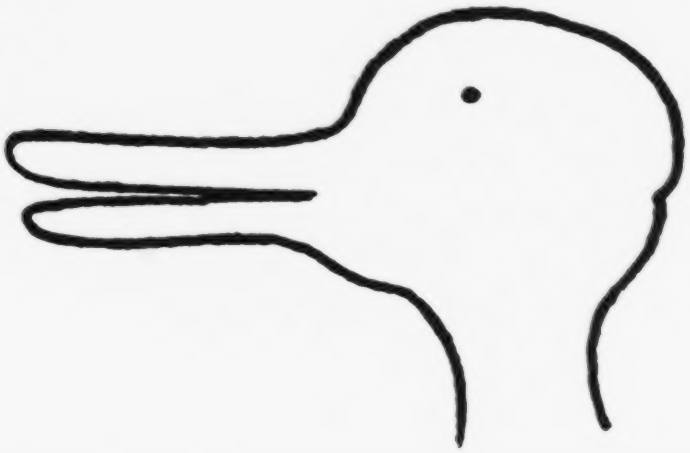
Berger & Luckman (1966) attempted to explain how shared meanings arise in social life, so that our particular way of viewing the world is constrained for us by the basic symbolic presentations made available to us by the social groups to which we belong. Symbols can represent both the material or 'seeable' cultural objects, and the manifest 'non-seeable' culture comprising beliefs, conventions, norms, as well as subtle nuances of attitude and gesture. Shared knowledge of a particular social reality is only possible within the context of a symbol system, a shared public language which is both derived from and built upon the meanings that adhere to everyday situations. Each person constructs a personal subjective reality from within the range of possibilities made available by the social group.

It is a truism that human activity is very complex—so complex that it can never be completely encompassed by any description of it, by any explanation or by any theory concerning what it means. Any attempt to

understand even a small facet of human conduct requires a cognitive appraisal, a culturally appropriate interpretation of what is occurring. How a social situation is defined will depend almost entirely upon the cultural or ideological viewpoint through which it is perceived. Hence, to say that all administrative action necessarily entails theoretical interpretations, which in turn necessarily entail a cultural context, is to draw attention to the special kind of cognitive appraisals upon which practical decision making depends. The nature of these cognitive appraisals can best be understood by analogy with the notion of 'seeing as'.

The philosopher Wittgenstein illustrates the notion of 'seeing as' by taking the well-known duck-rabbit figure (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1



This figure can be seen *as* either a 'duck' or 'rabbit'. The beak of the 'duck' becomes the ears of the 'rabbit'. The eye is common to both. The indentation to the right becomes the 'rabbit's' mouth and is irrelevant on the 'duck'. In each case, the figure remains the same, but we see it under a different aspect. The particular aspect under which someone sees it may be revealed in the way it is described. Wittgenstein comments on this as follows:

> If I heard someone talking about the duck-rabbit, and *now* he spoke in a certain way about the special expression of the rabbit's face I should say, now he's seeing the picture as a rabbit (Wittgenstein 1953, p. 206e).

Now, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Can you see the picture as both a duck and a rabbit simultaneously?

2. Could you see it as either if you did not have the appropriate concepts?

How the picture is seen depends upon the concepts that can be brought to it. Thus, our concepts and theories influence our picture of the world. Just as seeing is more than a visual sensation because it includes the whole cognitive process by which visual experience is interpreted, so observation is more than merely 'seeing what is there' because it includes the theoretical framework in which we interpret what we see. Therefore, what we observe, and what we decide to do on the

basis of what we observe, will be illuminated by what we know, by the concepts we already have. Hanson (1958) points this out with a number of examples:

> Would Sir Lawrence Bragg and an Eskimo baby see the same thing when looking at an X-ray tube? Yes, and no. Yes,—they are visually aware of the same object. No,—the *ways* in which they are visually aware are profoundly different. Seeing is not only the having of a visual experience; it is also the way in which the visual experience is had.
>
> At school the physicist had gazed at this glass-and-metal instrument. Returning now, after years in University and research, his eye lights upon the same object once again. Does he see the same thing now as he did then? Now he sees the instrument in terms of electrical circuit theory, thermodynamic theory, the theories of metal and glass structure, thermionic emission, optical transmission, refraction, diffraction, atomic theory, quantum theory and special relativity.
>
> Contrast the freshman's view of college with that of his ancient tutor. Compare a man's first glance at the motor of his car with a similar glance ten exasperating years later (Hanson 1958, pp. 15–16).

Even an object that is common or universal to all mankind, such as the sun for instance, may be 'seen as' something entirely different by people who hold different beliefs and theories about it. Compare the ways in which the sun might be seen by (1) a member of a culture who worships the sun as a god, and (2) a present-day scientist.

For the Aztec, the sun had a central significance in a whole interlocking network of religious and moral codes, social practices, rituals, artistic traditions and language. To a scientist, on the other hand, for whom it is nothing but a mass of burning gas, 'the sun' cannot be regarded as having the same meaning. Indeed, there is an important sense in which an Aztec and a 20th-century scientist, both looking at the sun (albeit at different times) could not be said to be seeing the same thing since the theoretical frameworks under which they see it would be so different.

Such examples show that knowledge, theories and concepts make a substantial difference to what is seen; so that, as Hanson suggests,

> There is a sense, then, in which seeing is a 'theory-laden' undertaking. Observation of X is shaped by prior knowledge of X (Hanson 1958, p. 19).

This means that all seeing and all perceiving involves forming hypotheses and using observational categories. Indeed, language itself functions as a classificatory system for that which is perceived. Hence, we must conclude that the presumed dichotomy between observation and interpretation is indeed false and that we have a strong case for the position that all practice is theory-laden.

Activity 6.1

Consider some of the different observational categories through which educational organisations may be viewed and list the main features of organisations that have been interpreted in terms of (a) management concepts, (b) human relations concepts, (c) concepts of cultural negotiation and (d) concepts of class struggle.

The theory problem in educational administration

Now you may be wondering what all this philosophical analysis of perception contributes to our understanding of educational administration. The point is simply to show the essential interrelationship between theory and practice by showing that all decision making is

necessarily based on theory-laden observation. Like any other practitioners, educational administrators must interpret their social world and, to this extent at least, they cannot avoid holding theories about the nature of that world. What concerns us here is the justification for those theories, their origin, the way in which they are held, and the extent to which they can be changed or modified to meet the demands of practice. In all these respects, we are taking educational administration to be philosophy in action.

Basically, there are three distinct ways in which educational adminstrators come to hold theories which will shape and determine their practice. The first is by taking up the conceptual orientations contained within an extant body of 'theory' derived from the endeavours of those who make a scientific study of educational administration. The second is by following the promptings of habit, convention and intuition derived from personal experience and contained within the domain of common sense. The third is by a philosophical critique of practice in which deliberative action is derived from a combination of empirical and interpretive modes of inquiry that have been brought to bear upon both the public domain of extant theory and the private domain of common sense. In what follows, we shall argue strongly for the third of these alternatives, but in order to do this we need to consider more closely some of the particular problems associated with the first two.

At this point, it hardly needs reiterating that there is a theory problem within the field of educational administration. But this problem is generally presented as though it existed within the field in which educational administration is *studied* rather than a problem within the field in which it is *practised*. Thus, it is recognised that the cumulative body of extant theory *about* educational administration is so diverse and unwieldy that it is more often found to be confusing rather than constructive in its influence upon practice. This body of theory has been accumulated within the main tradition of social scientific inquiry and largely reflects the changing orientations and paradigm shifts that have occurred within that tradition. It is not surprising, therefore, that administrative theory contains alternative views of social science, alternative methodological assumptions and alternative ideological bases. The understanding and explanation of organisations, for example, can be sought within a structuralist–functionalist orientation or within a voluntarist–phenomenological orientation. The problem for the practitioner appears to be one of choice and this is precisely how it is presented in the following reading.

Reading 16

J. A. Riffel, 'The theory problem in educational administration', *The Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1978, pp. 139–49.

Activity 6.2

Riffel opens his essay by positing the following three questions:

(i) What kinds of theories do we want in educational administration?

(ii) What underlying assumptions should guide them?

(iii) How will they help us to understand our work and our world, to establish our priorities, and to define our sense of what is possible and what is desirable?

1. Consider what kinds of answers to these questions are implied within the essay itself and write a brief comment on each.

2. Provide a brief answer of your own to each question and state why you agree or disagree with Riffel.

One of the problems with Riffel's article is that he discusses theory as though it were completely separate from practice. At the outset he speaks of educational administration as a *field of study*. He then goes on to write about the contemplative and executive *uses* of theory. Finally, he speaks of making *illumined choices* among alternative theoretical positions. But all of this assumes that the domain of theory is removed from the domain of practice, that it is a field of *study* rather than a field of *action*.

What is required is a major reconceptualisation of the problem. Perhaps the best way of achieving this is to explore the problem in slightly different terms. Since we have defined educational administration as philosophy in action, and since philosophy is often taken to be a form of reflective thinking removed from the practical realities of common sense, we can approach the theory–practice problem by examining the relationship between philosophy and common sense.

Philosophy and common sense

Common sense refers to the theories and beliefs which people share and hold in an unquestioning sort of way, and which provide them with a basic view of the world, of their position within the world and of how they ought to act in everyday life. When these beliefs are called into question, the task of philosophy gets under way and produces what Bertrand Russell called a 'sense of wonder' and the experience of 'liberating doubt'.

> The value of philosophy is, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty. The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason ... Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom (Russell 1912, pp. 242–3).

Thus, in this view, philosophy either shakes us out of the complacency of common sense and into a more sceptical, and presumably more desirable frame of mind, or it enables us to exercise our 'deliberate reason' so as to purge us of prejudices or release us from the bondage of muddled thinking.

From another point of view, common-sense knowledge may be defended against philosophical criticism on the grounds that it is closer than specialised forms of knowledge to the domain of action and experience. Perry (1965), for instance, writing about the importance of common-sense thought, knowledge and judgment for education, argues that common sense provides awareness of the kind of specialised knowledge it is necessary to apply to particular problems or situations. Common-sense thinking, according to Perry,

> may legitimately object to being superseded when specialized thinking makes an unjustified claim to deal more effectively with a subject: unjustified, because specialized verdicts have to be modified, as a rule, to be useful in the general field of experience, and it is the task of common sense to do this, and to judge what weight to assign to the various kinds of relevant specialized knowledge. Because common sense thought is concerned with experience lying outside the specialized area, it is justified not only in modifying but even on occasion overruling expert knowledge. Thus the politician overrules the general, the businessman the architect, or the teacher the psychologist (Perry 1965, p. 128).

This view of common sense clearly places it in a separate domain from specialised knowledge, giving it a superior status to the latter and overlooking the possibility that common-sense appraisals of a situation may be distorted by contextual and situational factors, rendering them less justifiable than the specialised theories which they supersede. But whether common sense is superior to philosophy, or whether, as Russell contends, philosophy is superior to common sense, may both become empty questions if we introduce the notion of philosophy in action to resolve the problem. But first we need to make the problem itself more explicit.

Briefly stated, the problem is that behind each of these constructions of the relationship between philosophy and common sense there is a problematic epistemological assumption. Each construction rests upon a dualism between thought and action, or theory and practice. Whether we take Russell's suggestion that the function of philosophy is to 'enlarge our thoughts', or Perry's argument that common sense is the final court of appeal in arriving at justifiable judgments, we have the basic assumption underlying each of these positions that philosophy and common sense are distinct, though related, ways of *thinking* rather than *acting*. Thus, any particular action we make upon the world may arise either from common sense or from philosophical thought, or from elements of both; but it is not the action itself which makes the difference, it is the way we think about it. What we have then, is a gap between theory and practice which is of the same kind as that which we noted in Riffel's article (Reading 16) on the theory problem in educational administration.

There is, however, another way of looking at this problem which draws initially upon a different philosophical tradition. According to Bernstein:

> It is an orientation that has its roots in Hegel, and in Marx's use and understanding of *critique*; that has been given a classical formulation by the central figures of the Frankfurt School; and that has been refined and developed by Jurgen Habermas . . . What I take to be most central in this tradition is the way it attempts to at once recover and defend the critical moment or impulse required for any adequate social and political theorizing. As I read the contemporary scene, it is this critical impulse that is breaking out among thinkers trained in radically different traditions. There is a dialectical movement from the advocacy of empirical theory to the realisation of the necessity for interpretation and understanding of social and political reality. And finally, there is growing recognition of the need for the type of critique that has a practical interest in the fate and quality of social and political life. The search for empirical correlations, the task of interpreting social and political reality, and the critique of this 'reality', are not three distinct types of inquiry. They are three internal moments of theorizing about social and political life (Bernstein 1976, p. 174).

Within such a tradition of critical theorising about social and political life, the relationship between philosophy and common sense can be reconstructed. Indeed, this very task was first undertaken by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1971) in his *Prison Notebooks*.

To appreciate the significance of Gramsci's critique of common sense, it is necessary to examine several other elements in his unique contribution to Marxist social theory and political strategy. Recognising the limitations within the traditional Marxist theory of the state, Gramsci set out to explain how culture and ideology become productive forces within advanced capitalist societies. The traditional view had emphasised the material mode of production and the economic base as the main buttresses which kept the state in place, protected by physical coercion

(or the threat of it) and other direct forms of social control carried out through the state apparatus. But this mechanistic explanation could not account for the failure of the working class to develop revolutionary consciousness, even with changes to the economic base. Gramsci concluded that there must be forces deep within the popular psyche itself which induced the oppressed to accept or 'consent' to their own exploitation and daily misery. He advanced the concept of ideological hegemony to explain how the ruling class maintains its dominance by achieving a popular consensus mediated through the various institutions of civil society, including the schools, the mass media, the law, religion and popular culture. This form of ideological domination evades resistance by permeating consciousness itself, becoming embedded in popular beliefs, values, folklore and common sense.

Thus common-sense knowledge structures mass consciousness in ways which mask and mystify the existing power relations and social arrangements. Cases of how this functions through such institutions as schooling are not difficult to find. Many working-class parents, for example, subscribe to the common-sense view that schools provide equal opportunities for all to succeed on the basis of merit. They believe that examinations and other forms of pupil assessment are objective and impartial devices for the distribution of educational rewards and that these rewards are allocated to individuals on the basis of ability and effort. Thus the rhetoric of equality of educational opportunity coheres with common-sense knowledge about schooling.

Although common sense, in Gramsci's view, lacks intellectual order and logical coherence, it is nevertheless a product of history and a part of the historical process. Its origins lie within a coherent and comprehensive world view, a philosophy that has been widely shared in the past. It therefore contains within it a residue of intuitions about life and the world which Gramsci calls 'good sense'.

The task of philosophy is to articulate and render this 'good sense' into a coherent and systematic world-view, free from hegemonic ideological distortion. In this view, philosophy is both critical and logically coherent, grounded in everyday experience while at the same time articulated through strategic political action. Only in this way can philosophy have cultural significance. The cultural contribution of philosophy is not to be found in its discovery of truths but in 'the diffusion in a critical form of truths already discovered'. Gramsci asserts that:

> For a mass of people to be led to think coherently and in the same coherent fashion about the real present world, is a 'philosophical' event far more important and 'original' than the discovery by some philosophical 'genius' of a truth which remains the property of small groups of intellectuals (Gramsci 1971, p. 325).

When this is achieved, and clearly it is an educational achievement, philosophy supersedes common sense – indeed it coincides with 'good' as opposed to 'common' sense. Philosophy should not be removed from everyday life to occupy some remote or esoteric realm of abstract ideas; it should be an essential dimension of everyday human experience and the criticism and reformulation of common sense. For Gramsci the majority of mankind are already philosophers in so far as they engage in practical activity for, in their practical activity, 'there is implicitly contained a conception of the world, a philosophy' (Gramsci 1971, p. 344). Thus, to realise each person's philosophical capacity is 'not a

question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making "critical" an already existing activity' (Gramsci 1971, pp. 330–31).

Closing the gap between theory and practice

Gramsci's reconstruction of the relationship between philosophy and common sense provides a dialectical dimension to the notion of administration as philosophy in action. It renders the critique of practice a philosophical task no less significant than the analysis of theory. In Gramsci's terms, the dialectic of philosophy is that it is simultaneously both active and reflective. On one hand philosophy cannot be divorced from politics because the choice and the criticism of a conception of the world is always a political matter. But, on the other hand, philosophy is also 'the invitation to people to reflect and to realise fully that whatever happens is basically rational and must be confronted as such, and that one should apply one's power of rational concentration and not let oneself be carried away by instinctive and violent impulses' (Gramsci 1971, p. 328). Gramsci does not suggest a specious unity of theory and practice but regards them as interdependent and dialectically related. To collapse theory into practice would be to ignore the creative and critical functions of theory; to make practice into something theoretic would be to diminish its social and historical dimensions.

This dialectical (or critical) conception of thought and action allows us to return to the theory-practice dichotomy and view it in a different light. Traditionally it has been posed as a problem of communication between theorists (or philosophers) and practitioners. Either the former have been blamed for constructing theories that are too abstract or complex for practical implementation, or the latter have been blamed for holding unhelpful attitudes towards theory and stubbornly resisting change. But it is also possible, following the discussion above, that each of these arguments misconstrues the problem entirely by creating a fallacious gap between theorists and practitioners. This whole issue is clarified for us in the following article by Carr (1980). We should point out that although Carr is not specifically writing about administrators, his argument applies to all areas of educational theory and practice.

Reading 17
W. Carr, 'The gap between theory and practice', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1980, pp. 60–69.

Activity 6.3

1. Explain Carr's distinction between 'the theory of theoretical practices' and 'the theory of educational practices'.

2. What is the misconception concerning the relationship between theory and practice which gives rise to the so-called 'communication gap'?

3. Summarise briefly the way in which Carr reconceptualises the theory-practice relationship.

The central point of Carr's argument is that theory and practice are not located in separate places waiting to be somehow 'brought together'.

He is arguing, in a similar vein to Gramsci, that all practice is inevitably theory-laden. Thus:

> anybody engaged in educational pursuits must, no less than anybody engaged in theoretical pursuits, already possess some 'theory' in virtue of which his practices are conducted and his achievements are assessed (Carr 1980, p. 64).

The point at issue is whether the 'theory' which guides practice is opened up to critical scrutiny or kept contained within the unquestioned confines of common sense. If we think of this in relation to the educational administrator, we can recognise the force of Carr's argument that 'gaps between theory and practice ... are closed by the practitioners themselves formulating decisions in the light of the framework of understanding that they already possess' (1980, p. 65).

This is a different view of theory from the one contained in Riffel's article. It no longer makes sense, for instance, to speak of practitioners choosing their theories in the way that a mechanic chooses an appropriate spanner. Rather, what we have is a notion of theory which can only come from the critique of practice itself.

Such theory 'stems from a recognition of the fact that the problems it seeks to confront only arise for and can only be resolved by educational practitioners' (Carr 1980, p. 67). It is this notion of theory which is implied by philosophy in action.

> in so far as educational theory seeks to help practitioners to confront their problems more effectively, then the concrete practical experiences out of which these problems are generated provides both the subject-matter for theoretical enquiry and the testing ground on which the results of this enquiry must be assessed (Carr 1980, p. 67).

Bringing philosophy into action

To conclude this section we shall examine a particular instance in the practice of educational administration in Australia where a philosophical critique has been demonstrated. This critique was occasioned by the circulation of a memorandum in 1970 to all heads of departmental schools in South Australia. The memorandum was issued by the Director-General of Education for South Australia and was addressed to the issue of freedom and authority in the schools. In the article which follows, Kaminsky (1981) describes the practical context in which the memorandum was produced and presents a philosophical critique of the logic and values contained within the document.

Reading 18
J. S. Kaminsky, 'The "Freedom and Authority Memorandum:" A philosophical addendum in educational administration', *The Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1981, pp. 187–200.

Activity 6.4

1. What were the administrative aims of the Freedom and Authority Memorandum?

2. What were the common sense assumptions behind this administrative action?

3. To what extent does a philosophical critique 'provide the conceptual tools and the arena in which educators could test out the probable consequences of taking the ideas of freedom and authority seriously' (p. 189)?

As an example of philosophy in action the issuing of the Freedom and Authority Memorandum is perhaps rather atypical. Certainly, it was a deliberate action that was taken by an educational administrator who was committed to a particular moral position. The document was intended to give expression to liberal democratic values in a rational manner. It was intended to have emancipatory effects for individuals by changing the organisational structures that existed in schools. Behind the document was a theory which held that contractual consent could form a framework for institutional change. But Kaminsky argues that the issuing of the memorandum was an administrative action which by its very nature could only be partly successful in achieving its aims. This is because of the inherent contradiction between the bureaucratic structure of the education system and the institutional individualism implied in the document. It is a particularly graphic example, therefore, of the kind of contradiction which abounds in the field of administrative practice and illustrates the kind of situation in which a critique of practice might be initiated.

Conclusion

This section began by proclaiming that administration should be philosophical in both its rationality or logic, and in the value positions upon which it is based. Administrative action should combine both an executive and a critical-reflective dimension. This means rejecting the technological or instrumental view and recognising that such a view arises from a number of false conceptual dichotomies. The assumed dichotomies between fact and value, observation and interpretation, practice and theory cannot be sustained. Thus we are led to ask the question posed by Hodgkinson:

> Given the present state of administrative theory, why do we not redirect our thrust for theory from the behavioural sciences, where it has become stuck, towards the humanities and the social sciences in their more philosophical, insightful, and prescriptive reaches? If there is to be a theory of administration it must be a theory of administered and administrative *man*. And we do not have enough of this (Hodgkinson 1978b, p. 273).

We have argued that administration is a form of moral action which can be meaningful only within a given cultural context. It is a form of cultural expression and negotiation deriving its meaning from the way in which social situations are cognitively appraised. Each decision made by an administrator is based upon a cognitive appraisal of the social and political context in which she or he is located. In this sense, therefore, all administrative practice is theory-laden.

Administration is a field of study in which various explanatory theories have been developed. As such it is a field in which different social scientific perspectives compete. But it is also a field of practice that may be constrained by the limits of common-sense knowledge. The aim of theorising is to subject this domain of common-sense awareness to a philosophical critique in which unquestioned beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions are brought under critical scrutiny. It is only by so doing that the gap between theory and practice can be closed and administration appropriately can be said to be philosophy in action.

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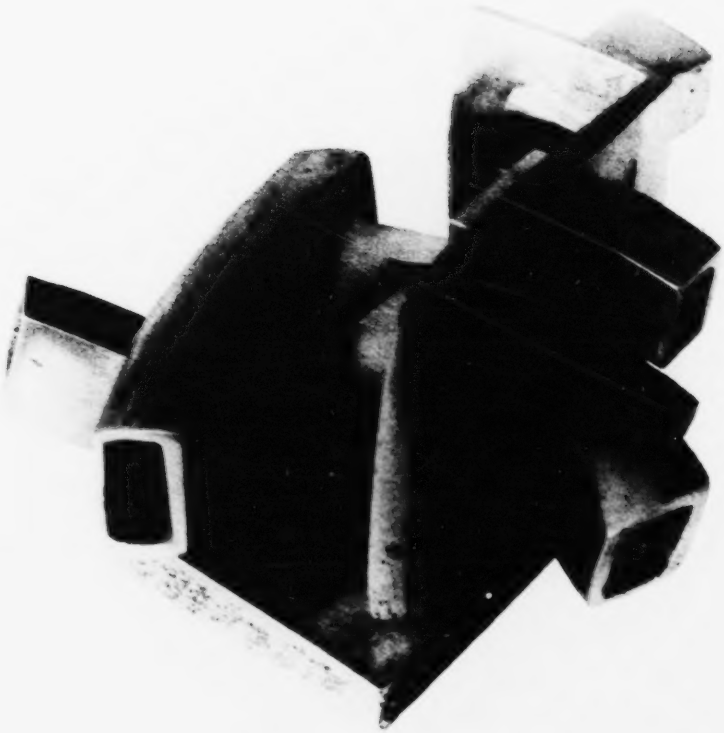
Acknowledgment

Quotes appearing on pp. 3, 4, from B. Fay, *Social Theory and Political Practice*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1975. Copyright 1975 Allen & Unwin.

SECTION 7
COMPETING CLAIMS, DECISION MAKING AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

John Clark



Untitled, cast aluminium by G. Johnston, 1975, Deakin University.

COMPETING CLAIMS, DECISION MAKING AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

John Clark

Introduction

Issues requiring administrative action are increasingly giving rise to competing claims about what ought to be done. Consider the case of Anzac High School, which may well become an all too familiar experience for many educational administrators.

> Jack Fordyce did not need to be a former maths teacher to know the impossibility of the computation he had set himself. "Nine into four just won't go", he thought wearily. It was August already and the major annual re-staffing exercise of the year was about to start. He had just been officially notified that his school would be entitled to only four new teachers. This was something of a shock as he had been anticipating six vacancies on the basis of normal staffing entitlement, and the number of current positions unfilled. To make matters worse he was under strong pressure from his heads of departments to staff at least nine positions. The matter was due to come up at the next senior staff meeting, and Jack had a fair idea of the demands that would be made by his H.O.D.'s
>
> The H.O.D. (Social Studies) would claim, with a good deal of justification, that his department had been operating at almost two teachers below strength all the previous year, and that with a recent resignation, the department now required three new staff. The H.O.D. (Languages) would argue that, given the ethnic background of many of the pupils, the introduction of Greek language and cultural studies with the appointment of a specialist teacher would more than justify itself in terms of pupil numbers. The H.O.D. (Science) had been working on Jack all year to recognise the serious staffing problem he had at the senior levels, though again the argument was more a qualitative than a quantitative one. Maths had a good case for two more teachers. English really needed to replace its drama teacher if next year's play was ever going to get off the ground. And to conclude the list of the more obvious shortages and demands, something would have to be done about supplementing the physical education staff if it was going to resume its place as a genuine core subject in the curriculum. The staffing situation had never been as tight before, and from previous experience Jack knew that he could anticipate some tough debating and a few angry scenes before the matter would be resolved (Prebble & Stewart 1981, p. 132).

Jack Fordyce was immediately aware of the dilemma facing him: how to adjudicate between the competing claims, taking into account the two problematics of decision making, *who* is to decide and *how* the decision is to be made? Unfortunately,

> explanations of the ways in which power conflicts result in particular decisions are hard to come by. Even more rare are theories which would allow administrators not simply to cope with but rather to influence decision making within the power structures influencing education (Bates 1980b, p. 15).

Having been concerned for some time with the decision making of Anzac High School, and wanting to be sure that the best possible decision was reached on the staffing issue, Jack decided to become more informed about decision making in educational administration and began to read into the topic. To help him in his thinking he constructed a chart on which to record his understanding of the various approaches to decision making.

Jack's attention was initially drawn to Greenfield's (1975) two views of organisational analysis—the traditional scientific approach and the more recent interpretive alternative. So it was to these two perspectives, and their implications for decision making, that he first began to take an interest.

Scientific decision making

Crucial to the scientific conception of decision making is the distinction between facts and values and a corresponding separation of means and ends, and administration and policy. The implications of such a distinction for decision making are twofold. Firstly, the separation of policy making from administration is clearly delineated. The assessment of competing claims is the concern of the non-administrator (i.e. the politician, the board or council). Once the ends have been established and policy made, then the administrators are required to accept the 'top-down' decisions and within the prescribed limits determine the most efficient and effective means of achieving the established end. As Simon wrote:

> the superior frames and transmits decisions with the expectation that they will be accepted by the subordinate. The subordinate expects such decisions, and his conduct is determined by them (Simon 1950, p. 125).

Thus the scientific model of decision making involves a concept of the administrator as manager, involved only with instrumental action.

Secondly, the basis of how decisions are reached is laid bare. The sharp distinction drawn between facts and values leads to the acceptance that what is the case can never determine what ought to be the case. Decisions over ends, including the assessment of competing claims, while influenced by the factual material available, are ultimately determined by the values and interests of those who decide. Such decisions are ethical and political, not scientific. On the other hand, decisions over means fall within the realm of facts and scientific analysis. The task of the educational administrator is to ensure that the most effective administrative means are adopted to ensure the successful implementation of the policy.

It is at this point that the logical base of scientific decision making emerges. The ideal exemplar is to be found in the hypothetico–deductive model of science and is, according to both Griffiths (1959) and Walker (1965), best expressed in Feigl's definition, as

> a set of assumptions from which can be derived by purely logico-mathematical procedures a larger set of empirical laws ... Let us speak of scientific explanation wherever more specific or more descriptive statements are derived from more general or more hypothetical assumptions (Feigl 1951, p. 182).

Put simply, in deciding which claims to accept, we need firstly to think through the logical relationship of cause and effect and ask what will be the consequences of one claim or another. Secondly, in assessing the degree to which any claim secures the desired end, we must ask whether we are adhering to the regulating criteria of scientific inquiry. Is our decision-making objective (free from personal bias) and does it achieve reliability (the degree of agreement amongst those deciding)? In concluding that educational administration is an applied science, Griffiths draws a parallel with similar fields:

> The administrator is an applier of science in much the same sense as is an engineer or doctor. There will always be some art in administration, as there is in engineering or medicine; but the amount of art will decrease as the amount of available scientific information replaces administrative folklore (Griffiths 1959, p. 24).

Reading 19

D. E. Griffiths, 'Administration as decision making', *Administrative Theory*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1959.

Activity 7.1
On your chart (Figure 7.1), list the main features of the scientific approach (column one) and complete this column by the end of the discussion on the topic.

Figure 7.1: Approaches to decision making

	Scientific	Interpretive	Cultural values	Rational discussion	Critical theory
Who					
How					
Strengths					
Weaknesses					

Despite the rigour of scientific decision making, Jack Fordyce quickly realised that such an approach contained a number of serious weaknesses. Decision making is not merely a matter of determining the best way of accomplishing a task, but also a matter of resolving ethical issues and setting goals and purposes. Therefore, deciding how the four new staff are to be deployed is a matter of considerable concern to all staff because it involves the arbitration of competing claims and consequently the invocation of moral choices concerning who is to decide and by what method. It is also clear that a school cannot simply be looked upon as an instrument for implementation of policy – realisation of ends and purposes which have been decided elsewhere by politicians or high level administrators in the education system. As Culbertson has remarked,

> the dynamics of human affairs involve moral considerations which must be addressed in decision-making, a condition not inherent, for example, in the dynamics of atomic particle flow or the spread of epidemic illnesses. Thus, educational administrators must make decisions daily which require moral judgements about what they or others 'ought' to do, and, when they lead in seeking major school improvements, moral issues become even more salient (Culbertson 1981, p. 42).

We must also object to Griffiths' argument that administrators should be concerned more with administration and less with education. This view is clearly inadequate in at least two senses. Firstly, any administrative system, as we have already noted in Section 5, presupposes a particular concept of education. In other words, administration and education cannot be compartmentalised as Griffiths implies. Secondly, it must be remembered that administrators are charged with the 'administration of education' and it is with educating pupils that they should be primarily concerned. We must, according to Foster, view the school as

> an organization in a cultural and historical milieu in an attempt to relate the objective need for schooling with social and economic realities. This, it must be asserted, is necessary to a fully administrative understanding of the organization-in-time. The educational administrator must ask, 'Manage for what end?' Why do schools, for example, tend to dominate certain (underclass) children, perhaps without realizing it? What is it about schools organizationally ... that allows the success of certain groups and the failure of others despite the attempted equalization of resources? Who wins in the educational game, and why? It is these questions, I think, that are the significant ones for educational administrators (Foster 1980a, pp. 16–17).

Indeed they are, for they direct our attention to the fundamental *raison d'être* of decision making in educational administration – the education of children. The value of decisions reached and actions taken must be, in axiological terms, related to the degree to which the education of children is furthered. To ask questions about the ends of education is to ask questions about what is of value, thereby leading us back to the distinction between facts and values. Griffith's acceptance of control, power and authority implicitly presupposes the validity of the is–ought gap. Now, while we may acknowledge a loose distinction between empirically derived facts and socially derived values, the sharp separation of facts and values must be rejected, for

> facts are embedded in a context of values, and if one looks at administration as the direction of resources to solve problems, then it should be clear that at the most basic level, problems are defined as such only because they conflict with certain values. It is of no use to claim ... that the problem is defined by those outside administration and that therefore the fiat to stick to the facts still applies; even in the process of generating solutions, the administrative decision-maker receives facts that are interpreted within a system of values (Foster 1980b, p. 498).

One thing was particularly apparent to Jack Fordyce. Scientific decision making in educational administration leads to a technical control of the school, with the establishment of absolute control by a technical elite, for it is the administrators with their technical competence who decide on the means to an end, and such technical matters are beyond the comprehension of lay people. Thus:

> educational administration is a technology of control. Specifically, it is a technology of control devoted to (i) the production and allocation of persons, and (ii) the production and allocation of knowledge. Clearly, the process of schooling does not exhaust the social mechanisms by which control is exercised over people and knowledge, but it is probably the most ubiquitous and powerful process devoted to such control (Bates 1980a, p. 66).

For Jack Fordyce, the adoption of scientific decision making would do little to solve his staffing problem. Certainly, he could attempt to follow the procedures laid down, but in the final analysis the decision would be a moral-political decision and not a scientific decision, concerned with the ends of education—the curriculum which ought to be offered by the school to its pupils. As against scientific decision making, the facts and values of the situation are incontrovertibly intertwined; values, sectional interests and the exercise of power as well as factual argument would finally determine the staffing issue, and as such the scientific approach just could not do what Jack Fordyce required of it as a mediating process between competing claims and administrative action.

Interpretivism and decision making

If the asocial, ahistorical and dehumanising nature of scientific decision making in educational administration is to be rejected, then what about the interpretive alternative?

It was Gibson (1972) who, attracted to the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, first sought to demonstrate that hermeneutics (the interpretation of the symbolic context which human experience derives from its consciousness of the situation) offered an alternative account by which the process of adjudicating between competing claims could be guided. The crucial issue, according to Gibson, centres on social control—to whose interpretations or claims are we to ascribe legitimacy?

The interpretive approach seeks to understand the context of the decision-making process rather than specifying the logical conditions to be fulfilled in order to achieve means to ends. Emphasis is placed on the administrator appreciating the interpretations and subjective meanings of the participants involved in the decision-making process, and becoming aware of the interpersonal mechanisms of power and control which are hidden when decision-making is scientific. Thus,

> organizations are the perceived social reality within which people make decisions and take actions which seem right and proper to them. The heart of this view is not a single abstraction called organization, but rather the varied perceptions by individuals of what they can, should or must do in dealing with others within the circumstances in which they find themselves (Greenfield 1975, p. 79).

Within the interpretive mode of decision making, the lived reality of school experience is always mediated through our subjective understandings and these are not shared by all concerned. Accordingly, the central problem in decision making is

> not whether order shall be maintained but rather who maintains it, how, and with what consequences ... People strive to impose their interpretations of social reality upon others and to gain command of the organizational resources which will permit them to do so (Greenfield 1975, p. 87)

It is evident that the HODs of Anzac High School have different interpretations of what is desirable by way of staffing, subject maintenance and curriculum provision, and we could speculate as to what their deeper interests are as each goes about attempting to ensure that his own claims are legitimised.

By now, Jack Fordyce had become interested in the interpretive approach to decision-making, and decided to pursue Greenfield's ideas further.

Reading 20
Greenfield, T. B. 'Against group mind: an anarchistic theory of education', a revised version of a paper published in the *McGill Journal of Education*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1982, pp. 3–11.

Activity 7.2
Begin the column on the interpretive perspective (Figure 7.1) and complete it by the end of the section on this topic.

While Jack Fordyce quickly realised that the interpretive approach to decision making offered considerable insight into the particular interests and values of the participants along with the social mechanisms used to legitimise decision outcomes, he also could not fail to notice a number of serious limitations which weakened its claims to be an adequate basis for decision making. If Greenfield is correct, then there is no objective reality or final decision, but only many subjective realities whose existence depend on language. As such, what is true or false is so in terms of what the various participants (HODs) think, rather than corresponding to some objective state of affairs; thus we can never be in a position to judge between the competing claims. The relativism (all claims are equally valid) inherent in the interpretive approach leaves it in an impotent state, since Jack Fordyce and his staff would not be able to decide which of the staffing claims ought to be accepted.

A further objection to interpretive decision making lies in its neglect of the wider social context within which decisions are made.

> In accepting the participant's account there is a danger of neglecting the significance of power and economic-political interests in social life. Furthermore, the emphasis on participant's reasons raises problems over false-consciousness—that the reasons they give are their real reasons and not those that they have been deceived into accepting as reasons. Additionally, there is a neglect of institutions and the causal conditions of behaviour. What people do may not always be done for the reasons they give. Rather, deeper underlying social-economic-political forces in society, of which they are unaware, may determine what they think and do (Clark 1981, p. 23).

So, in the final analysis, the interpretive approach has much to offer in the way of providing insight into the subjective meanings of the participants in the decision-making process and seeking to reveal their underlying interests, motives and value orientations. But, at the practical level, the inherent relativism means that Jack Fordyce could not resolve the dilemma of how to adjudicate between the competing claims for new staff.

Cultural values and decision making

Despite his rejection of the interpretive approach to decision making, Jack Fordyce was, nevertheless, still attracted to some of its more positive features. In particular, he accepted the critique of the separation

of facts from values and administration from policy, as well as of the 'top-down' line of authority which scientific decision making embodies. Furthermore, he could see that the various participants in the decision-making process would almost invariably have different value orientations concerning what is worthwhile and desirable, and these would not only be in conflict, but the values themselves would be deeply embedded in the decision-making process. Jack Fordyce also accepted that democratic rather than autocratic decision making would be desirable if he was to help bring about the type of school he wanted. He was well aware not only of the various values underlying the competing claims for the preservation of traditional subject boundaries, but also of the cultural values of the pupils at the school, and how these had to be taken into account when considering the school curriculum.

In his concern for the development of a well-balanced curriculum, Jack Fordyce had spent considerable time reading and reflecting on the Curriculum Development Centre's (1980) *Core Curriculum for Australian Schools*, so that when he came across an account of decision making based on cultural values written by the CDC director, he was interested that such an approach might offer a way forward to help resolve his staffing issue, as well as decision making in the school in general.

Reading 21
M. Skilbeck, 'Administrative decisions and cultural values', *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1972, pp. 128–41.

Activity 7.3
Work through and complete the third column on cultural values, Figure 7.1.

Certainly, much of what Skilbeck says adds to our appreciation of the value-ladeness of decision making within a social context informed by a plurality of cultural values, along with a corresponding need for decision making to be collegial or democratic in nature. He writes of

> an important shift in the locus of authority: from control over school administration exercised from outside, e.g., by a state department, to increasing control from within, i.e., by the community of pupils, students and teachers ... Given the diversity of value orientations of those working within schools we can anticipate that one consequence of this shift in the locus of authority will be increased conflict. The management of conflict in fluid situations, where more decisions are of a collegiate character than ever before, will become a major policy objective (Skilbeck 1972, reader p. 310).

And further:

> a single principal may exercise ultimate internal authority over questions of pupil discipline, teacher freedom, curriculum and so forth, and at the same time carry out a full administrative role in relation to policy directives which come into the school from its external environment. How does he balance the different types of claims made upon him? Are there some overarching criteria which govern the various subsets of decisions? (Skilbeck 1972, reader p. 305).

Unfortunately, Skilbeck gives no answers to his questions. So, despite having been made aware of the value context of decision making in educational administration, Jack Fordyce was still left with the unresolved dilemma of staffing, although the problematics of decision making (who and how) were perhaps beginning to take shape in a way that they had not earlier on.

Discussion and decision making

The idea raised by Skilbeck about collegial rather than autocratic decision making had the consequence of directing Jack Fordyce's attention towards finding out more about democratic participation and discusssion as the basis for decision making.

To begin with, democratic decision making is guided by three general principles, namely that (1) decisions internal to the school should be made by all of those who are directly affected by the decisions, (2) these should only be taken after full and free discussion of the issues involved, and (3) all those participating in the decision making must accept the decisions made and ensure their implementation through the appropriate administrative action. In other words, people have a general right to share in the making of decisions which directly affect them; and this goes well beyond mere consultation.

Democratic decision making rules out the conventional principal or administrator, thereby making invalid any distinction between policy decisions made by the head as against those made by the staff as a whole, for the decisions taken by the principal under an autocratic system are those which directly affect other members of the school who are entitled to share in the decision making. It is questionable whether the issues of concern to all should be decided upon by one person. Consequently, consideration should be given to the powers vested in the principal being shared with other members of staff.

It is doubtful whether democratic decision making need nécessarily take more time, thereby making a democratic school less educationally effective than a traditional school. On the contrary, it is more than probable that a democratic school, involving all interested parties in discussion on what ought to be done, would increase the effectiveness of involvement in the educational programs. The making of democratic decisions is coincidental with discussion which would bring this about. Thus, what makes a discussion democratic is not just that most of those participating agree with the final decision, but also that all have had the opportunity to participate freely in fully discussing the issue.

It might be objected that such decisions require specialised knowledge if they are to be made well, and that this knowledge is possessed by principals and not by teachers. That is, it may be felt that administrators know best and that the pattern of control should reflect this. If, however, as we have argued, teachers have a moral right to make certain decisions about what directly concerns them, then the principal is certainly not entitled to deny them that right. And furthermore, on many issues a variety of points of view are needed so that the otherwise 'taken for granted' decision is not only open to criticism, but is also considered along with alternatives. Neither senior school administrators on the one hand, nor teachers on the other, start off with access to all the relevant information needed to make decisions, and it is often only through discussion and democratic decision making that the 'best' decision is arrived at.

Reading 22

D. Bridges, 'Discussion and decision-making', in D. Bridges & P. Scrimshaw (eds), *Values and Authority in Schools*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1975.

Activity 7.4
To what extent is democratic decision making based on discussion feasible? Record your consideration of this in column four, Figure 7.1.

Bridge's analysis of the three forms of discussion – correctness, consensus and victory – and their implications for policy decision making in educational administration, clearly gives further guidance for decision making at Anzac High School. With regard to the staffing issue, Jack Fordyce reflected on the viability of each of the three modes of discussion and how these might help him resolve the issue.

Unless he changed things, it was more than evident to Jack that decisions over staffing would be made on the basis of the pursuit of victory by each HOD. After all, they had vested interests in maintaining their subject strength, as well as the protection of the status and prestige of their positions. He couldn't help but agree with Bridges that

> decisions and decision-making of this kind characteristically involve trials of strength, of personality, of positional or personal authority, of sheer political or economic power, of basic cunning or of powers of persuasion. Those who engage in them must presuppose *either* that though the issue is amenable to rational and logical argument one may justifiably choose to pursue the policy one wants regardless of such argument; *or* that the issue under discussion (if not all issues of policy) is not amenable to rational and logical argument (Bridges 1975, p. 95).

This was something Jack Fordyce certainly wished to avoid. As for decisions based on consensus, he could see that at times a degree of consensus was desirable, especially where arriving at the 'right' decision and arriving at a consensus amount to the same thing. There was no doubt in Jack's mind that consensus could lead to a greater cohesion amongst staff in adopting and supporting school policy decisions, but he was determined that this should not be achieved at the expense of a critical examination of all relevant arguments and evidence brought to bear in the defence of any particular policy claim or option. And besides, on the staffing issue it was highly unlikely that consensus would, or even could, be reached.

The third alternative seemed to offer a real possibility – rational discussion which has the aim of bringing about a decision on a course of action such that 'the decision is as nearly as possible the right or correct one as judged on some objective grounds'. Accordingly,

> those participating are engaged in a disinterested pursuit of the right or correct decision. They are concerned to uncover and examine all the relevant arguments and evidence and expect that this examination will demonstrate which is the right or at least the best course of action. They value free and open discussion as the means by which as much evidence as possible and as full a range of opinions and arguments as possible may be brought to bear to the issue under consideration (Bridges 1975, p. 84).

And further:

> public discussion serves as the crucial testing ground for argument – revealing weaknesses and illogicalities in one policy after another until such time as there emerges a proposal which seems to withstand critical onslaught and survive the tests of evidence. This policy, decision or proposal secures agreement among those engaged in the decision-making because it is the policy indicated by those rational procedures to which they are committed (Bridges 1975, p. 85).

Despite the direction provided by rational discussion for decision making in educational administration, Jack Fordyce could see that it was not without its problems. Firstly, the framework of decision making as

outlined was rather limited by its brevity, for it was not clear as to how reasons, evidence, arguments and values all came together; nor was it evident just how all of this discussion would adequately resolve the issue. Secondly, even if the Bridges approach is valid, his account of rational discussion nevertheless is optimistic in that few instances of decision making match this model. A reason for this could be the intrusion of those pursuing victory. In the case of the staffing dilemma, such a situation could well eventuate, for each HOD has much to gain, as well as much to lose, in the decisions to be made over which departments are given new staff. Underlying the claims of each HOD are competing views about the educational importance and institutional status of each subject and department. And finally, there was no indication of what sort of criteria could be applied to judge a decision as the 'correct' or 'best' decision. Correct or best for whom—principal, teachers, pupils? And to what extent is it correct or best in terms of educational, political, social or economic criteria?

Critical theory and decision making

Jack Fordyce was despondent. To date, he had not been able to locate any account of decision making which overcame the difficulty identified by Bates (see p. 22). In desperation, Jack was driven back to where he had first begun—the theory debate in educational administration; and it was here that he finally found an approach which he could adopt.

Arising out of a rejection of both scientific and interpretive perspectives in educational administration had developed a third position, advocated by Bates (1982) and Foster (1980a, 1980b) and having its origins largely but not exclusively in the writings of the 'Frankfurt School of Social Theory', particularly Habermas. So Jack decided that he needed to know more about this perspective. In his now classic *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas (1971) proposes a three-fold classification of knowledge which has a direct relevance to an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of decision making.

Figure 7.2

'Knowledge . . .'	'has a constituted interest . . .'	'grounded in a dimension of social existence.'
empirical-analytic	*technical*	*work*
historical-hermeneutic	*practical*	*interaction*
self-reflection	*emancipatory*	*power*

Each form of knowledge has a knowledge-constituted interest grounded in a dimension of social existence. The empirical-analytic form (science) embodies technical control over natural and social reality and is located in work; the historical-hermeneutic form (phenomenology) has a practical interest, the interpretive understanding of linguistic communication in everyday discourse within an interactive setting; and the self-reflective form has as its constituted interest, emancipation—the pursuit of human autonomy and responsibility involving self-reflection upon one's historical-material conditions. The emancipatory interest can only be realised in and through the concrete social and political action of men.

We are not faced with exclusive choices of either scientific rationality, phenomenological understanding or critical theory. Rather, an adequate account of decision making must be empirical, interpretive and critical.

> The mediation of theory and praxis can only be clarified if to begin with we distinguish three functions, which are measured in terms of different criteria: the formation and extension of critical theorems, which can stand up to scientific discourse; the organization of processes of enlightenment, in which such theorems are applied and can be tested in a unique manner by the initiation of processes of reflection carried on within certain groups towards which these processes have been directed; and the selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions, and the conduct of the political struggle. On the first level, the aim is true statements, on the second, authentic insights, and on the third, prudent decisions (Habermas 1973, p. 32).

The interaction of the three forms of knowledge occurs within a context of discourse, set aginst the standard of 'ideal speech' or open, non-distorted communication.

> Ideal speech is that form of discourse in which there is no other compulsion but the compulsion of argumentation itself; where there is a genuine symmetry among the participants involved, allowing a universal interchangeability of dialogue roles; where no form of domination exists. The power of ideal speech is the power of argumentation itself (Bernstein 1976, p. 212).

What then, are the implications of critical theory for education in general and for decision making in educational administration in particular? Education is given a significance which is not considered by the other approaches. The end is to achieve emancipation within a context of communication undistorted by domination and through the means of political struggle.

> The purpose of education in terms of the knowledge provided by a critical social science is the transformation of the consciousness of the actors it seeks to understand, a transformation which will seek to increase their autonomy by making it possible for them to determine collectively the conditions under which they will live ... All the members of the group actively engage in deciding what it is they are and want, and what arrangements must be altered or established in order to fulfil themselves (Fay 1975, p. 105).

The administration of schools must be guided by this central aim, and the decision-making process must clearly reflect the rationality of critical theory. The consideration of competing claims must be within a context of free, undistorted and non-coercive communication where the interests of the various parties are understood, and where decisions embody the good of all members, and not just the interests of administrative decision-makers. Consequently, there must be a restructuring of the school so that it can respond to the needs of all its members; accordingly, educational organisations must be 're-rationalised' so that they are managed rationally without domination.

> Administration in its most radical form involves the design of organizational structures which meet certain redoubtable human needs – equality, liberty, justice (Foster 1980a, p. 12).

The problematics of decision making (who and how) now begin to manifest themselves in significant ways for educational administrators. Decisions are made collectively through the power of rational argument in accordance with the criteria for non-distorted discourse. In this context, administrative action taken by the participants is that which best allows the people concerned to achieve their own ends.

A parallel approach has been suggested which has its origins in the 'new' sociology of education. The thrust of this movement is towards an analysis of the relationship between structures of knowledge and structures of social organisation, in that the former is a mirror of the latter. In directing our attention to this relation, Bates focuses on five basic principles:

1. What counts as knowledge in social life is determined by the nature and structure of that social life.
2. The structure of social life is determined by the means of production.
3. The social life of any group is, therefore, differentiated according to the division of labour.
4. The division of labour (at least in capitalist society) leads to the creation of differences in power, thus leading to the creation of a hierarchy and the development of an elite.
5. The exercise of power by the elite both determines and is determined by the division of labour, which is a result of the means of production, which controls the social life and consciousness of men, which *is* what counts as knowledge (Bates 1980b, p. 9).

Considered in the context of decision making in educational administration, the sociological thesis just outlined takes on a particular significance. If an adequate theory of educational administration is to be developed, six crucial questions must be confronted; and these have a critical bearing on the staffing issue facing Jack Fordyce.

1. What counts as knowledge?
2. How is what counts as knowledge organised?
3. How is what counts as knowledge transmitted?
4. How is access to what counts as knowledge determined?
5. What are the pressures of control?
6. What ideological appeals justify the system (Bates 1980b, p. 9)?

The implications of these questions for decision making must be clearly spelled out. What counts as knowledge is different from one group to another. This being so, the interests of various groups will be in conflict, and will be articulated in the form of competing claims about the nature of schooling. Consequently, educational administrators must be able to identify the political interests embedded in the competing claims. Furthermore, curriculum knowledge is organised according to the administrative structure of the school and reflects the institutional domination and control over what is considered worthwhile knowledge. The transmission of such knowledge is designed to ensure maintenance of the control which administrators assert over what teachers teach and pupils learn. Accordingly, the structure and power of administrative organisation and decision making are reinforced.

It is crucial to establish the connection between administrative practice in schools and the structure of society. In determining who has access to

knowledge, the school becomes the primary social agent for the differentiation of children into the various streams of curricula and selective examinations. The effect of this is to make certain knowledge available to some children and not to others, thereby determining their life chances in the occupational structure and the consequent economic rewards and social status. The hand of the school administrators is planted firmly on the mechanisms of control. Thus, it is quite clear that how decisions are arrived at largely reflects the ideological stances of those in administrative power. Whether to be agents of social change or social control, whether to perpetuate or eliminate economic and political domination and oppression—these are the crucial issues facing educational administrators as they go about their daily task of deciding what goes on in their schools.

> Whether that culture is largely based on metaphors of participatory democracy, equity and cultural liberation, or on metaphors of capital accumulation, hierarchy and domination is at least partly attributable to the exercise of administrative authority during the negotiation of what is to count as culture in the school. A critical practice of educational administration would, necessarily, be reflective concerning such negotiations, placing them within the context of a critique of domination and a commitment to struggle in the interest of a better world (Bates 1982, p. 12).

Reading 23
W. P. Foster, 'The changing administrator: Developing managerial praxis', *Educational Theory*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1980, pp. 11–23.

Activity 7.5
Note down the significant features of critical decision-making in the fifth column of Figure 7.1.

The development of a critical theory of decision making in educational administration seeks to be both coherent and comprehensive in its undertaking. At its centre lies the notion of praxis—the unity of a theoretical analysis of schooling in a social-political-economic reality with the practical art of decision making in which the forces of such a reality are confronted. Within this approach there is a coherence of conceptual relationships exemplified by:

1. Recognition of the empirical base of the competing claims
2. Logical interaction and inescapable dialectic of facts and values
3. Reciprocity of the causal forces of social-economic structures and the interpretive meanings and subjective understandings of those who in their daily lives create the organisations within which they work

This subjectivity and creativity means that they develop an awareness of the essentially axiological nature of the cultural context of decision making, the desire for free, non-coercive discourse within participatory, democratic and non-dominatory social relations, as well as an appreciation of the political reality of schools as transmitters of the ideological determinants of a dominant culture within a capitalist economy.

Thus it was that Jack Fordyce came to the end of his review of the various approaches to decision making in educational administration. Before him lay his now completed chart. Suddenly he realised that he faced not one, but several dilemmas. Firstly, there was the substantive problem of allocating staff. This had prompted the review of decision making in the first place. Secondly, there was the problem of how to

choose the appropriate method of decision making. For example, deciding on the approach of critical theory would, paradoxically, countermand the very tenets of critical theory. It occurred to him that there was a case for involving the staff in a collaborative choice of a decision making format. If, by chance, the staff decided on the scientific model, then this would be in line with a critical practice of administration, for the staff would have exercised autonomy and had the opportunity to make a decision congruent with their needs and interests. In other words, the technical rationality of the scientific model would have been incorporated within an emancipatory interest. A third dilemma concerned the groups which should participate in the substantive decision concerning the allocation of staff. To begin with, Jack had considered only HODs. Now, however, he was coming to the view that all interested and concerned parties should be involved—that is parents, students and other staff as well as administrators.

Activity 7.6

Turn to your completed chart, Figure 7.1. Consider each of the competing claims and then come to a decision, supported by reasons, as to how the dilemmas mentioned (and any others that may occur to you) would be resolved.

Conclusion

This section has been concerned with analysing the problematical nature of decision making in educational administration through a case study approach. We found that the scientific perspective, although rightly stressing the necessity of an empirical base of factual information, nevertheless had a number of defects, not the least of which were the domination and control of those most affected by the decisions through the separation of facts and values, administration and policy. Furthermore, it was suggested that while recognising that interpretive understanding of the participants leads to a deeper awareness of whose claims are legitimised and why, this approach had to be rejected on the grounds that not only did its relativism deny the possibility of deciding anything at all, but it also failed to adequately locate the locus of power in the wider context of social-political-economic relations. While the emphasis of the cultural values approach sought to illuminate the basic underlying axiological framework of decision making, along with the need for shared participation, in the final analysis this perspective failed to address itself to the basic issue of how to mediate between competing claims. Likewise, with the demand for rational discussion and democratic participation by those directly affected by the decisions—while recognised as essential for decision making—such an approach neglected to take notice of the social location of decision making. Finally, in so far as it embodies most of the strengths of the other approaches within a framework of undistorted, domination-free communication aimed at emancipatory self-reflection and action upon one's historical-material conditions, critical theory was found to be the most coherent perspective and as such should form the base upon which a critical practice of educational administration and decision making can be developed.

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SECTION 8
BUREAUCRACY, EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY: TOWARDS A POLICY OF PARTICIPATION

Richard Bates

'Awakening', corten steel by C. Meadmore, 1969, AMP Square, Bourke Street, Melbourne.

BUREAUCRACY, EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY: TOWARDS A POLICY OF PARTICIPATION

Richard Bates

Introduction

Previous sections have argued that administration is 'philosophy in action' thus insisting on the judgmental, moral and epistemological bases of administrative decision making. According to this argument administration is a public pursuit that must be justified and defended in public by appeal to publically arguable criteria. The difficulty with such a position is that it is clearly at odds with traditional organisational theory – especially in its educational applications (see Hoy & Miskel 1982). Educational administration as a field has, until recently, accepted uncritically the formulation of management theorists whose work is devoted to both the analysis and the extension of bureaucracy as a technique for managing human affairs. The patron saint of such bureaucratic advocacy is frequently taken to be Max Weber whose name is invoked as the originator of bureaucratic theory and practice. Such a view is, in fact, a travesty of Weber's position. In reality Weber, while presenting a brilliant analytic account of the bureaucratisation of society, was horrified by the potential of bureaucracy in destroying humanity through the creation of the 'iron cage' of organisational life.

Recently, however, a number of theorists, especially those involved in public administration, and, more generally, those with a commitment to phenomenological, Marxist and critical theoretical perspectives have begun to reassert Weber's status as a comprehensive and trenchant critic of bureaucratic society.

Building on Weber's critique of bureaucracy those theorists are also developing a variety of ideas of ways in which organisations might be altered to once again serve, rather than overshadow, the interests of individuals and communities. Fundamental to these attempts are concepts of democracy, participation and education. Indeed Brian Fay calls the alternative to the bureaucratic relationship an *educative* relationship. There is, he insists, a close relationship between the educational task of liberating individuals through critical self- and social-awareness, and the social task of reconstructing organisational society so as to increase the possibility of autonomous action free from domination.

This is very heartening for those of us who have long experienced the tension between the pedagogical tasks of education and its bureaucratic overburden. In particular, the form of organisational analysis and critique that is developing is providing an increasingly clear account of the social, cultural, psychological, linguistic and political costs of organisational society. It is also clear that many of the remedies are to be found in various forms of educational activity. This section presents a brief outline of the emerging theoretical critique of bureaucratic-organisational society, discusses the educative basis of the alternatives argued by the critical theorists, and shows in particular how certain structures of educational governance can be altered to make both educational and social structures more responsive to human needs.

Individual responsibility and the iron cage of bureaucracy

The task of reconciling individuals to the increasingly rationalised structures of economic and social life is a central problematic in most social and administrative theory. The question is frequently seen as that of harnessing individual motivation to the efficient pursuit of politically or managerially determined goals. The rational organisation of collective action in pursuit of such goals has been a major preoccupation of managers and bureaucrats for some time now (see Hoy & Miskel 1982). Indeed, the apparent solution to this problem through the development of large scale bureaucracies is widely regarded as one of the major achievements of the modern world. For example, Weber, in his analysis of the increasing scope and power of bureaucratic organisations in the modern world asserted that 'Bureaucracy is the means of transforming social action into rationally organised action' (1968, p. 987).

Weber, contrary to popular mythology, was neither the inventor nor an advocate of bureaucracy. Indeed, he saw, in the unfettered pursuit of rationally calculated means to ends determined by 'dominant interests', the creation of an essentially mechanical world unfit for human beings. 'Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is "dehumanised", the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business, love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation' (1968, p. 975). Weber viewed the resulting 'iron cage' as a terminal world whose inhumanity would lead to a final, 'mechanised petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance' (1958, p. 182).

The most extreme form and perfect example of the resulting iron cage is, of course, the totalitarian society which achieves social, economic and political rationality through the forcible subordination of individual interests to the interests of 'the state'. The mechanical petrification and convulsive self-importance of such states is abundantly clear in current totalitarian regimes of both right and left.

The major objection to such states is usually the extent of force required to ensure submission to the 'rationality' of the state. But as Huxley (who shared Weber's vision) suggested in his introduction to *Brave New World* (1980):

> A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves *who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude* (Huxley 1980, p. 12, emphasis added).

The creation of loving serfs, or to give it a title of greater self-importance, the engineering of consent is one of the great tasks facing the controllers of the iron cage. It is a task given, says Huxley, 'to ministries of propaganda, newspaper editors and school teachers, (1980, p. 12). The task is that of socialisation.

Clearly all societies and cultures socialise their members into certain patterns of value, belief and conduct. Socialisation is an inevitable concomitant of social life. However, the socialisation demanded by bureaucratic organisation is radically different from that of most cultures, societies and communities in that it is directed towards the effective *depoliticisation* of both organisational members and clients.

That is, as Hummel suggests:

> In bureaucracy, administration replaces politics. Not politics as the decision-making core activity of society – bureaucracy increasingly makes the central decisions that govern public and private life – but politics as the participatory activity of citizens cooperating or fighting with one another to work out solutions to public problems (Hummel 1982, p. 185).

In this process the essentially public process of political argument and decision 'is replaced by the purportedly apolitical decision-making of the managerial few ... the public, those affected by the decisions, is systematically excluded from the process' (Hummel 1982, p. 185).

This fundamental depoliticisation of the public is a key feature of the socialisation processes demanded by bureaucratic organisations in their construction of the iron cage. Indeed, as Denhardt suggests, the specific form of socialisation required by such organisations is becoming a generalised feature of organisational society.

> The result of this [organizational] socialization process is the widespread assumption of a particular viewpoint, a sort of organizational ethic, one which supports the extension of an organizational society and offers itself as a way of life for persons in our society. To the extent we accept that ethic, we will come to see the world in terms of order and structure rather than conflict and change; we will come to value discipline, regulation and obedience in contrast to independence, expressiveness and creativity. And we will see the world in terms of techniques for resolving inconveniences in the smooth and efficient administration of human affairs. What is especially important is that this new ethic of organization does not just instruct our activities in organization (as do theories of organization); rather, its power is so great that it recommends those same patterns of thought and behaviour for our lives generally (Denhardt 1981, p. 5).

Thus, socialisation into organisational bureaucracies and more generally into the organisational society is significantly different from socialisation into most other forms of social, cultural or community life. This is because, in bureaucracies, the scope for political action as a public expression of personal meaning and commitment is both reduced and restricted to the managers. The opportunity for meaningful action by individuals is therefore significantly appropriated and substituted by the hierarchy of organisational control. This produces, at the individual level, a paradox: the *meaning* of individual action is frequently contradicted by the *rationality* of organisational demands. As Denhardt suggests:

> The dilemma faced by the individual seeking a context for meaningful action is that as the continued bureaucratization of society displaces earlier political, vocational, and religious concerns, the individual is left with few opportunities to engage in actions outside organized systems. The problem with this ... is that organized systems are inherently based around notions of regulation and control. This means that the organized individual is placed in the contradictory position of attempting to pursue meaningful choice within systems of regulation, a result that is both confounding and alienating in its impact (Denhardt 1981, p. 8).

Thus, the 'rationality' of bureaucracy produces a profoundly irrational situation for the individual who, moreover, is prevented from pursuing public and political solutions to various dilemmas by the avowedly apolitical nature of the range of organised structures which are the only possible structures through which he can approach the organisational society. It appears that the central problem with which social and administrative theory has been concerned for the past 200 years – that of reconciling organisational efficiency with personal motivation and commitment through bureaucratisation – has reached an impasse.

The extent of this impasse is well argued by Denhardt in your next reading where he suggests that modern organisations, through their hierarchical structures of accountability, both absolve and deny the individual any moral responsibility for actions which accord with the organisation's rules and interests. If administration is to be regarded as philosophy in action, as we have suggested earlier in our discussion (Section 6), then this is an issue that must be resolved.

Reading 24
R. B. Denhardt, 'Individual responsibility in an age of organization', *Midwest Review of Public Administration*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1977, pp. 259–69.

Activity 8.1
Administrators, as well as the administered, are frequently put in situations where their sense of individual responsibility conflicts with their organisational duties. Indeed, such conflicts are typically a preoccupation of nearly half of the respondents to national surveys (Kahn et al. 1964, pp. 20–21). It is likely, therefore, that you have experienced such conflicts either as an organisational functionary or as an organisational client. Outline one such experience in anecdotal form and review it in terms of Denhardt's analysis.

Visions of order: Mechanisms of domination

Denhardt's analysis in the paper you have just read and in his book *In the Shadow of Organization* (1981) points not only to the depoliticisation consequent on the development of the organisational ethic, but also to the de-moralisation of the individual. That is, the restriction of decision-making power to those in charge of the organisation both de-politicises the majority of functionaries and clients and, simultaneously, absolves them from moral responsibilities—provided that they obey the rules. The result is the production of what Berger et al. (1973) have called *The Homeless Mind*. This is the result of accepting the instrumental, objectified, depersonalised logic of bureaucratic operations in which, contrary to the philosopher Kant's insistence that people must be treated as ends in themselves rather than simply as means, individuals are treated in a purely functional manner. Thus, as Hummel points out:

> students become the 'products' of universities. Workers become the 'tools' of management. Individuals holding roles within an institution become subsystems performing functions within a system—'functionaries'. And clients become 'cases' or things (Hummel 1982, p. 41).

In the end, as Weber's terrifying vision of the reality of bureaucratised society suggested, the inhabitants of the iron cage become 'specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved' (Weber 1958, p.182).

Hummel's (1982) extended analysis of Weber's famous essay on bureaucracy identifies five major transformations associated with the organisational ethic. Bureaucracies, he says, demand transformations of our previous historical and biographical experience in five areas: social, cultural, psychological, linguistic and political.

> Bureaucracy gives birth to a new species of inhuman beings. People's social relations are being converted into control relations. Their norms and beliefs concerning human ends are torn from them and replaced with skills affirming the ascendancy of technical means, whether of administration or production. Psychologically, the new personality type is that of the rationalistic expert, incapable of emotion and devoid of will. Language, once the means for bringing people into communication, becomes a secretive tool of one-way commands. Politics, especially democratic politics, fades away as the method of publicly determining society-wide goals based on human needs; it is replaced by administration (Hummel 1982, p. 2).

Thus the quest for order and control which justifies the bureaucratisation of the modern world ends up producing an inherently irrational situation which destroys the very humanity it pretends to serve. Indeed,

> the rational model of administration may assist in efforts at prediction and control in the interest of efficiency, but it cannot provide an understanding of the meaning of organizational life or a critique of its limitations. Moreover, where the rational model serves as a model of appropriate human action, it provides an extremely limited view of the individual, especially with respect to the question of moral consciousness. Finally, since the rational model inherently serves the interests of social regulation, it cannot aid in the individual's search for autonomy and responsibility. Yet these are just the issues which must be resolved in order for persons to explore new ways of relating to one another as they share in the tasks of life (Denhardt 1981, p. 123).

So what is to be done? In my view two things are fundamental. Firstly, we need to demystify organisations, and secondly to modify the varieties of organisational life so that organisations become participative structures responsive to human needs.

Demystifying organisations

One of the curious aspects of our analysis of bureaucracies is that the analysis *reifies* bureaucracies at the same time as it *despairs* of their consequences. That is, the essential human agency which created and maintains bureaucratic organisations is lost sight of and the bureaucracies are treated as social institutions that have a life of their own above and beyond human control. Indeed, many explanations of organisations treat them as structures through which individuals pass, and as mechanisms which subject individuals to treatments such as socialisation, rehabilitation, education and so on. Thus, as Berger & Luckman argue, 'the real relationship between man and his world is reversed in consciousness. Man, the producer of a world is apprehended as its product, and human activity as an epiphenomenon of non-human processes' (1967, p. 89).

The first step in demystifying organisations is, therefore, to acknowledge that they are created and can, therefore, presumably be *re*created; that is, to recognise organisations as works of the *imagination*, despite their often very concrete external appearances. Becker argues, for example, that in organisational life as in the wider sphere of social action,

> Man's answers to the problem of his existence are in large measure fictional. His notions of time, space, power, the character of his dialogue with nature, his venture with his fellow men, *his primary heroism*—all these are embedded in a network of codified meanings and perceptions that are in large part arbitrary and fictional (Becker 1971, p. 56).

We are entitled to ask, therefore, whether the rational model which organisational theory presents as an accurate and persuasive model of human action is, in fact, an acceptable fiction; acceptable, that is, as an

explanation and interpretation of our experience, or as an ideal to which we can commit our 'primary heroism'.

In response to the first issue, there are increasing doubts among mainstream organisational theorists as to the validity of the perceived wisdom of the social sciences. For example, Perrow has this to say:

> Neither social scientists nor people in general are as smart and rational as they think they are. Social scientists mask this reality by desperately trying to make sense of many things that are really quite senseless when examined closely. Yet they convey the impression of lawful, even rational behavior because of research techniques that are largely self-serving. Social scientists have constructed fictions, such as the idea of personality or character and the notion of evolutionary change, to hide the disorder of our everyday existence and the unpredictable nature of human history (Perrow 1982, p. 684)

Indeed, it is not difficult to suspect that it is this very disorder in the affairs of men that provokes the attempt to explain, predict and control the world. But while positivistic science has been immensely successful in applying the logic of causation and control to the domination of the physical world, the transfer of such explanation and action to the social world has been much less successful. In part, this is because of the unpredictable nature of human behaviour and in part, as we have noted previously, to the objectionable moral consequences of organisational hierarchies. But these objections have not prevented the transformation of the logic of physical science into the fictions of social science. Taking the example of organisational goals as a key construct in organisational theory Perrow has this to say:

> The idea of organizational goals is one of our most powerful order-giving constructs and one of the best ways to impose a reality upon our everyday workspace. [But] the notion of goals may be a mystification, hiding an errant, vagrant, changeable world that will never make more than a 0.3 correlation in social science research ... Do organizations have goals, then, in the rational sense of organizational theory? I do not think so. In fact, when an executive says, 'this is our goal', chances are that he is looking at what the organization happens to be doing at the time and saying, 'Since we are all very rational here, and we are doing this, this must be our goal'. Organizations, in this sense, run backward: The deed is father to the thought, not the other way around (Perrow 1982, p. 687).

Thus the notion of ordered rationality serving organisation goals may well be a fiction that is downright misleading in an attempt to understand organisations. It seems proper, therefore, to ask what purpose such a fiction might serve. Or rather *whose* purposes it might serve.

Organisational theory and organisational purpose

Without suggesting a conspiracy theory, Perrow suggests that in general:

> the problem the organization is mandated to deal with, and the methods of dealing with it, are formulated on the basis of elite consensus about how the system should work. Poverty is the responsibility of the poor; deviant behaviour is defined as such by elites even if the deviants do not see it as deviant; solutions must come from help to the poor, rather than a restructuring of society, and so on (Perrow 1978, p. 113).

Thus, in the process of maintaining the interests of the elite consensus,

> it would not do for the executive of an agency that purportedly is helping the poor to seek a massive redistribution of wealth in the community by taxing the rich heavily and giving it to the poor, or cutting the salaries of highly paid officials and using the money to create jobs for the poor, in, say, renovating slum housing; to investigate inefficiency and corruption in other agencies so that they might give more help; or organise the poor

into an effective political force that would remove elected officials or even restructure the government. These are all possible solutions to the problem, but they would not conform to the expectations of the present system. Thus, solutions, such as they are, must not disturb the system, even if the system might help cause the problems. The sensible executives know this quite well; indeed, so well that they often are not aware that they know it (Perrow 1978, pp. 113–14)

Perrow therefore agrees with Weber who saw bureaucracy operating dispassionately and remorselessly to serve the interests of dominant elites. Indeed as Salaman (1981) points out, the whole doctrine of the rational pursuit of organisational goals serves to gloss the coincidence of organisational and class structures. As Perrow again suggests,

our efforts at giving accounts and attributing rationality serve the elites much more than they serve the majority of the people. These efforts create a world in which technological necessity, organizational hierarchy, profit goals, and so on become legitimated. They reduce the space for the ordinary mortal to move around (Perrow 1982, p. 688).

Reducing the space for the ordinary mortal to move around, however, is an inevitable outcome of an organisational fiction based upon premises of explanation, prediction and control of the social world. The issue of control is paramount. But while the task of explanation and prediction in the physical sciences allows (indeed, is devoted to) control of inanimate, or at least non-human objects, the utilisation of a similar model in the social world can only mean the control of the majority of ordinary mortals by (invariably self-serving) elites. Thus the fiction of the rationally ordered bureaucracy, neutral, apolitical and dispassionate in its pursuit of neutral organisational goals can be seen to be, on the one hand, a probably inaccurate representation of a disordered social and organisational reality and, on the other, a fiction that serves minority interests while simultaneously reducing the space for ordinary mortals to move around. This being so it seems likely that the mass of ordinary mortals might well find an alternative fiction more acceptable, especially if it was one which presented a model that made better sense of their experience and was committed to increasing rather than reducing their control over their own destiny.

Towards an alternative fiction

Such an alternative model is rapidly emerging in the theoretical worlds of social theory, public administration and education. It is a model that draws on two major theoretical traditions. Those of phenomenological analysis and of critical theory. Phenomenological analysis is based on the work of Edmund Husserl and rests on a fundamental distinction between the objectives of the natural and social sciences. While the natural sciences adopt an instrumental approach to the causation of phenomena in the physical world, social sciences are regarded as being additionally concerned with understanding the ways in which humans attach meanings to their actions. In contrast to the explanation of the behaviour of physical objects (which can often be objective, deterministic and predictive) the phenomenologist argues that the intentionality of human action introduces the possibility of creative, even unique, responses to experience. As a result of this basic understanding of the difference between the predictable world of the physical sciences and the implicitly unpredictable world of the human or social sciences, phenomenology is much better placed to understand and explain the apparent disorder of the human world that Perrow argues frustrates the polite fiction of organisational rationality.

The task of critical theory is complementary to that of phenomenological analysis. That is, it is the purpose of critical social theory to explicate and penetrate the rationalisations and justifications (ideologies) which sustain the apparent regularities of social life.

> It is the task of critical social analysis to cut through these justifications, or ideologies, and to establish the regularities of social action which lie beneath the surface of our relationships. In turn, the critique permits us to see relationships of dependency and submissiveness which have previously been concealed; it sets off a process of self-reflection in which we begin to comprehend our true condition (unfettered by ideological constraints). To engage in serious and unconstrained self-reflection leads to self-knowledge—and guided by self-reflection, we can engage in responsible social action (Denhardt 1981, p. 113).

Thus, in contrast to the instrumental model of the physical sciences (and the traditional model of bureaucratic organisations) a model of social action is being developed that takes account of the unpredictable results of human intentionality and offers a method of critical social analysis that allows us to penetrate the ideological constraints of the social world in which we live. The preceding discussion of traditional organisations theory is an example of such critical social analysis.

An educative democracy?

It has been argued by Fay (1975, 1977) that this form of critical analysis makes possible an alternative model to the instrumental relationship between theory and practice employed by physical and traditional organisational science. Fay calls this alternative 'the educative model'. Its intention is to provide people with an understanding of their own lives, that is, of their needs, of the social conditions that prevent the fulfilment of those needs and ways in which their lives, and the social system, might be changed so as to increase the chances that their needs will be met. According to Fay:

> Both the instrumentalist and the educative models promise freedom; but in the former it is the freedom that results from knowing how to achieve what one wants, whereas in the latter it is the freedom to be self-determining in the sense of being able to decide for oneself, on the basis of a lucid, critical self-awareness, the manner in which one wishes to live. In the educative model, the practical result of social theory is not the means for greater manipulative power but rather the self-understanding that allows one's own rational thinking to be the cause of one's actions; i.e., social theory is a means towards increased *autonomy* (Fay 1977, p. 207).

It is not accidental that Fay should call the alternative to the instrumental model educative, for, as Connell et al. have pointed out, 'Education has fundamental connections with the idea of human emancipation, though it is constantly in danger of being captured for other interests' (1982, p. 208). The relationship between education, participation, democracy and decision making is explained by Margetson (1980) in your next reading. As you will see, although Margetson draws on quite different sources for this argument the conclusion is much the same as we have reached on the basis of our analysis of organisational theory.

Reading 25

D. Margetson, 'Participative attitudes and educative democracy', in J. Zajda (ed.), *Education and Society in the 1980s*, Proceedings of the Australian Comparative and International Education Society, Bendigo, November 1980.

Activity 8.2

Turn to the last activity of the previous section (Activity 7.6). How does the proposed resolution of the decision-making problem measure up to the criteria of participation and educative democracy, discussed by Margetson?

Regaining community

One of the significant effects of the emergence of organisational society has been the administrative destruction of community; that is, the destruction of common values, experience and commitment over the whole range of human action that serve to produce a coherent and comprehensible view of the social world and to sustain individual participation in it. How could it be otherwise when organisations depoliticise and demoralise their members by wrenching them away from their cultural roots—those systems of shared values, ideals and ways of living that are the essence of community? For the bureaucracy as Weber (1968) noted, imposes norms of precision, stability, discipline, reliability, calculability, rationality, impersonality and formal equality, thus submerging and denying the norms that traditionally govern social life: norms of 'justice and freedom, violence and oppression, happiness and gratification, poverty, illness and death ... victory and defeat, love and hate, salvation and damnation' (Habermas 1971 p. 96; see also Weber 1968, pp. 226–41).

There has been, in the present century, continuous pressure to extend the rational model of organisational control to embrace a greater and greater part of social life. Some of the most persistent critics have been the members of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory—Horkheimer, Fromm, Marcuse, Adorno and Habermas among others. They have pointed to the encroachment of bureaucracy on increasing areas of social life, such as sport, leisure, art, communications, family and community. Other critics, such as Focault, have pointed to the 'microphysics of power' that saturate modern organisations in which 'power is exercised without division' (Focault 1979, p. 197).

As I have argued elsewhere (Bates 1982a, 1982b) schools are under particular pressure to adopt and impose the impedimenta of bureaucratic rationality and to exploit the microphysics of power in order to exercise control over a potentially rebellious youth. As Margetson points out in his comment on R. S. Peters' image of children as barbarians at the gates of the citadel of civilisation, we should reflect carefully on the implications of such an image of youth.

However inappropriate such an image is, there is no denying its historical importance for, as Katz points out:

> Public schools were created to alleviate major behavioral problems and to shore up a social structure under stress (Katz 1980, p. 78).

The causes of the social stress were then, as now, varied, but had much to do with the mass emigration from rural to urban areas under the impact of the mechanisation of agriculture and the growth of urban industry, and with the international emigration from Europe to various New Worlds. In both cases, one of the significant social problems that arose was the mutual unintelligibility of conflicting cultural traditions, whether they were regional (as was generally the case in rural–urban migration) or national (as was the case in international migration). In both cases it was considered politically necessary to eliminate, or at least

reduce, the patterns of previous behaviour and thought originating in the rural European cultures and replace them with a standardised, homogenous pattern of behaviour. The result, as Johnson (1976) reports of Victorian England, was that schools, churches, police and other agencies mounted a major assault on the cultural remnants of rural community life that the new urban poor carried with them to the cities. In essence, the effort was to destroy the vestiges of rural culture and replace them with a new identity more compatible with the emerging industrial-administrative state. As Katz (1975) and Tyack (1974) suggest, the American response to massive European immigration was similar.

Education was seen as a major means of social and cultural control but, perhaps unsurprisingly:

> Despite the rhetoric and claims of their promoters, schools had very little effect upon crime, delinquency, and poverty. These problems did not disappear after schools had been founded, as an over-confident first generation of school-men had predicted. Despite a massive expenditure of funds and a recurrent attempt to use the schools to alleviate social pathology, little connection ever existed between the extent of public education and the amount of distress and disorder in social life (Katz 1980 p. 78).

This observation is, on the whole, unremarkable, for as Pusey (1979) suggests, the outcomes of education are indeterminate and the conditions of education contingent upon external factors over which schools have little control. This, however, has not prevented the attempts of educational bureaucracies to increase their leverage over schools by centralising decision making and control. The result, as Wise (1979) and Murphy (1979) point out, is that the 'hyperationalization' of the very large bureaucratic structures which supposedly govern education effectively prevents delivery of the very educational services it is designed to provide. The response of schools is frequently, as Meyer & Rowan (1978) point out, to ritualise their relations with the bureaucracy in order to block out interference so that they can get on with the job.

Getting on with the job means, increasingly, adapting to local circumstances, be they social, cultural, economic or political. And local circumstances are increasingly differentiated from each other. This social differentiation leads to major policy problems for centralised educational bureaucracies because it challenges the bureaucratic emphasis towards standardisation (which inevitably prescribes goals and outcomes that are at variance with, or irrelevant to, an increasing proportion of the population) and *hierarchisation* (which cannot cope with multiple and indeterminate processes rapidly enough to exert control). In essence, educational bureaucracies are increasingly recognised as incapable of exerting rational control over educational processes.

The result of this realisation may be, on the one hand, to attempt further rationalisation of the bureaucracy and a strengthening of corporate management techniques and increased attempts to clarify lines of authority, accountability and control. Such was the attempt of the *White Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victorian Government Schools* (1980). Alternatively, the more appropriate response would seem to be something along the lines suggested by Middleton (1979) in your next reading.

Reading 26

M. Middleton, 'Devolution or inversion: Two conflicting approaches to school and community decision-making', in *New Directions in School and Community Studies*, Vol. 1, School and Community Project, Canberra College of Advanced Education, Canberra, 1979.

You will recognise that Middleton's proposals are based upon an analysis of educational administration very similar to our own and results in recommendations for a form of social action that is educative in nature (Fay); participatory and democratic in form (Margetson); socially critical in its objectives; and directed towards increasing autonomy rather than hierarchical control. As such, it meets the demands of our alternative organisational fiction for the remoralisation and repoliticisation of individuals under conditions of autonomy free from domination. The achievement of such a fiction in the daily work of schools is an administrative task worthy of the effort.

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SECTION 9
POSTSCRIPT

Laurie Rattray-Wood

'Adam Lindsay Gordon Monument', bronze by P. Montford, 1931, Melbourne City Council, Swanston Street, Melbourne.

POSTSCRIPT

Laurie Rattray-Wood

By now you will be fully aware that the purposes of the course did not include the provision of rules for action when management chores are executed; such as tips on appropriate day-to-day employment of a school secretary, filing systems, building security and maintenance, insurance, computers and photocopying machines. It is well known that senior personnel in schools do have a real need for knowledge about these things, but surely such items are learnt when the inquiring mind is applied to problems associated with getting physical tasks completed in a satisfactory and economical manner. A host of resources, possibly in the form of salesmen or business people who are perhaps members of the school council, are often readily available to assist with such matters.

We have been concerned to expose the deterministic and functional nature of schooling as it mainly exists. In doing so we have argued that the traditional positivist mode of investigation could not be relied upon to support such an exposition for indeed, up until now, the determinism involved appears to have had a powerful influence in most 'scientific', supposedly value-free research and consequent development. Alternative paradigms were proposed within our preferred concept of the 'administrator as an educator' as it promotes 'administration as philosophy in action'. These views are radical in the sense that they are fundamental and are not in accord with traditionally accepted perspectives. Awareness of depoliticisation and reproduction of social injustice, as outcomes of existing structures and modes of interaction, provides the inducement for the development of a social consciousness with a critical perspective. The rhetoric of liberation that brings emancipation through participation will need to act through a process which has the effect of 'social development'. When the rhetoric is applied within a narrower process of 'socialisation' it is invariably implemented as a legitimating strategy for forms of social control, such as we observed in the unsuccessful implementation of the human relations approach to administration.

This introductory course has been planned so as to have value as a single entity, or as a prelude to further studies of leadership, resources and evaluation in education and schools. These studies are the subject of debate in the succeeding courses in educational administration.

An interest in future directions for the study of educational administration should be invoked when the dynamics of paradigm shift and attempts at synthesis are made to interact in order to 'come to terms with the distinctive realities and consequences of organisational behaviour and administrative practice in educational organisations' (Boyd & Immegart 1979). These authors suggest there are several promising approaches for the future study of educational administration, but argue that 'the research approach that appears most conducive to the new thrust is that of educational policy analysis'. You are directed to the final reading for their explanation of this development.

Reading 27

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